

THE ICEBERG THEORY

all the food critics hate iceberg lettuce.
you'd think romaine was descended from
orpheus's laurel wreath,
you'd think raw spinach had all the nutritional
benefits attributed to it by popeye,
not to mention aesthetic subtleties worthy of
verlaine and debussy.
they'll even salivate over chopped red cabbage
just to disparage poor old mr. iceberg lettuce.

i guess the problem is
it's just too common for them.
it doesn't matter that it tastes good,
has a satisfying crunchy texture,
holds its freshness,
and has crevices for the dressing,
whereas the darker, leafier varieties
are often bitter, gritty, and flat.
it just isn't different enough, and
it's too goddamn american.

of course a critic has to criticize;
a critic has to have something to say.
perhaps that's why literary critics
purport to find interesting
so much contemporary poetry
that just bores the shit out of me.

at any rate, i really enjoy a salad
with plenty of chunky iceberg lettuce,
the more the merrier,
drenched in an italian or roquefort dressing.
and the poems i enjoy are those i don't have
to pretend that i'm enjoying.

THE AUTHORITIES LEARN A NEW WORD

if they don't like the way we talk,
our language is termed "inappropriate."

if they don't like the way we act,
our behavior is "inappropriate."

when we want to control our children,
we invoke the almighty "inappropriate."

we don't say anything is bad or wrong or evil
because we have no absolute standards
with which to support our judgments.

of course we don't have any standards
for what is inappropriate either,
but it sounds like an appeal
not to morality
but to reason
although it is, of course, in fact,
just a better-sounding way
of laying down the law.

PRODIGY

i received an unexpected award today.
no, i didn't even have to apply for it;
it was just handed to me.
it wasn't exactly a literary prize ...
it wasn't exactly a tribute to athletic skills ...
it didn't include a citation of
some legendary sexual prowess ...
and no, it wasn't husband-of-the-year ...

but i did receive it at
a younger age than most.

and it does have monetary value.

yes, i was caught quite off my guard
when the pretty young lady behind the counter
presented me with,
at the cherubic age of fifty-four,
my Penguin's Frozen Yogurt Senior Citizen Discount Card.

VINCENT VAN GOGH: JOSEPH-ETIENNE ROULIN

everyone oohs and ahs
over the postman's beard.

to me it seems
a pretty stupid beard.

the pseudo-oriental, peacock-and-posy,
wallpaper-like backyard

is even worse.

i suppose this painting is worth millions today,
but i wouldn't have given five sous for it,
then as now.

yeah, i know about expressionism
for shit's sake.